

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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HEW-06 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-02 PRS-01 DHA-02 SCA-01
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FM AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3885

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SWEL, SENV, EFIS, EAGR

SUBJECT: FLOODS AND DROUGHT, SOUTHERN TAIWAN

CLEAN-UP OPERATIONS ARE UNDERWAY IN SOUTH-CENTRAL TAIWAN AFTER WORST FLOODS SINCE 1959. FLOODS WERE CAUSED BY A WEEK OF HEAVY RAIN, WHICH AT ITS PEAK JUNE 6-7 POURED EIGHT INCHES IN AS MANY HOURS ON TAINAN AND KAOHSIUNG. TOTAL RAINFALL DURING SEVEN-DAY DELUGE WAS 12 INCHES AT CHIAYI, 22.4 INCHES AT KAOHSIUNG, 32 INCHES AT TAINAN, AND 33 INCHES AT ALI-SHAN.

CASUALTIES INCLUDE 18 KNOWN DEAD, 1 MISSING, 1 SERIOUSLY INJURED AND 600-1000 STILL UNABLE TO RETURN TO THEIR HOMES. DAMAGE WAS APPARENTLY HEAVIEST IN TAINAN REGION, BUT EXTENSIVE FLOODING AFFECTED LARGE AREA STRETCHING FROM CHIAYI SOUTHWARD TO KAOHSIUNG AND PING-TUNG. PRELIMINARY REPORTS INDICATE DAMAGE TO TELECOMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES, ROADS, BRIDGES, CROPS, FISH-PONDS, CANALS, STORED FERTILIZER, SALT POUNDS AND OTHER PUBLIC INDUSTRIAL, AND PRIVATE PROPERTY WILL DEFINITELY RUN INTO MILLIONS AND VERY POSSIBLY INTO TENS OF MILLIONS OF U.S. DOLLARS. HOWEVER, IN RELATION TO TOTAL ECONOMY OF AREAS AFFECTED, IMPACT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN CONSIDERABLY LESS THAN CATASTROPHIC. ABOUT TEN PERCENT OF PADDY FIELDS IN AFFECTED AREAS APPARENTLY SUSTAINED SOME DEGREE OF DAMAGE, RESULTING IN PROSPECTIVE DECREASE IN ISLAND-WIDE

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FIRST CROP RICE HARVEST OF ABOUT 1.4 PERCENT ACCORDING TO PRELIMINARY ESTIMATES. ONLY A VERY SMALL ACREAGE WAS WASHED AWAY, AND MUCH OF DAMAGED RICE CAN BE SALVAGED THROUGH DRYING AND/OR PROCESSING INTO RICE WINE. EFFECT OF LOSS IS FURTHER MODERATED BY FACT THAT RICE PRODUCTION THIS YEAR IS EXPECTED TO BE IN EXCESS OF DOMESTIC NEEDS. AT HEIGHT OF FLOODING, NEARLY 20,000 PEOPLE REQUIRED RESCUE. HOWEVER, NEARLY ALL

HAVE SINCE RETURNED HOME, AND ONLY A FEW DOZEN HOUSES
HAVE BEEN REPORTED TOTALLY DESTROYED.

NEVERTHELESS, CERTAIN SMALL SECTORS OF LOCAL ECONOMY APPEAR
TO HAVE BEEN RATHER HARD-HIT, NOTABLY FISH CULTURE.
APPROXIMATELY 16,000 HECTARES OF MILK FISH PONDS, 540 HECTARES
OF EEL PONDS AND LARGE NUMBER OF SHRIMP PONDS
ARE REPORTED BY THE PROVINCIAL FISHERIES BUREAU TO HAVE BEEN
AFFECTED.

THERE WAS ALSO SIGNIFICANT LANDSLIDE DAMAGE TO CROSS-ISLAND,
ALI-SHAN, KAOHSIUNG-PING-TUNG, AND SUAO-HUALIEN HIGHWAYS,
THOUGH ALL ROUTES ARE EXPECTED TO BE OPEN TO TRAFFIC WITHIN
THREE DAYS. TAIWAN PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED TO
GRANT RELIEF TO FAMILIES WITH MEMBERS DEAD, MISSING, OR INJURED
IN FLOOD IN AMOUNT OF NT\$8,000 (US\$211) FOR A FATALITY,
NT\$5,000 (US\$132) FOR A MISSING PERSON, AND NT\$4,000 (US\$105)
FOR A SERIOUSLY INJURED INDIVIDUAL. DRYING MACHINES HAVE BEEN
ORDERED INTO OPERATION TO MINIMIZE LOSS OF WATER-LOGGED RICE,
AND SURVEYS OF DAMAGE SET IN MOTION TO SERVE AS A BASIS FOR
TAX RELIEF. THE LAND BANK OF TAIWAN AND COOPERATIVE BANK
OF TAIWAN BOTH PLAN TO MAKE DISASTER LOANS. THE FLOOD IN
SOUTH-CENTRAL TAIWAN FOLLOWED A DROUGHT WHICH IS STILL
CONTINUING IN HENCHUNG AREA, ON SOUTHERN TIP OF ISLAND.
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